

# what's up?

## age of consent revised code of washington (RCW)

### What's it all about?

In Washington State, **minors** are persons *less than 18 years of age*. The ability of a minor to consent to care may depend upon the type of treatment being sought. Minors cannot consent for their own medical care, eg., treatment of an ear infection or a sore throat. However\*, they may consent for:

- **Sexually Transmitted Disease/HIV Testing**  
(RCW 70.24.110)

Minors age fourteen and older may seek care for STDs; diagnostic and treatment information is confidential in this instance.

- **Alcohol and Drug Treatment**

Outpatient and inpatient treatment of minors for chemical dependency.  
(RCW 70.96A.095 and RCW 70.96A.097)

Any person thirteen years of age or older may give consent for himself or herself to the furnishing of outpatient treatment by a chemical dependency treatment program certified by the department. Parental authorization is required for any treatment of a minor under the age of thirteen.

- **Mental Health Treatment**

Outpatient and Inpatient  
(RCW 71.34.530 and RCW 71.34.500)

A minor thirteen or older may be admitted for either inpatient or outpatient mental treatment without parental consent.

- **Abortions/Contraception**

Law provides for a minor's ability to provide consent for abortion, birth control and reproduction. There is no age limit. (See State v. Koome.)

- **Marital Status**

The marital status of a minor impacts the minor's ability to consent for treatment. "All minor persons married to a person of full age shall be deemed and taken to be of full age."

\* Note that most agencies rely on their own attorney's opinion to interpret these statutes. Also, most health care providers will assess the client's maturity and abilities. They also encourage teens to discuss/communicate the issues with their parent/guardians if appropriate



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